

Different Times, Same Playbook**Moscow's Response to US Plans for Missile Defense** (b)(3)(n)

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*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.**—George Santayana, 1905*

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The times and the characteristics of US missile defense plans have changed, but the Russian state of mind has not.
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The Bush administration's stated intent to review all missile defense options and move forward with deployment ensures that this issue will remain a major concern to Russia and an analytic challenge for the Intelligence Community (IC). Analysts today focus on reading between the lines of Moscow's politically charged rhetoric against US missile defense plans just as they did when trying to assess the Soviet reaction to the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). US policy-makers want to know what Russia might do militarily in response to US missile defense plans, what the political implications would be if the United States deployed such a system, and whether Russian threats to withdraw from arms control treaties to protest US actions are credible. (b)(3)(n)

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 are analysts in CIA's Directorate of Intelligence.

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Evolution in US Programs (b)(3)(n)

Attempting to address US vulnerability to a Soviet missile strike, President Reagan announced what came to be known as SDI on

23 March 1983. He called for "a comprehensive and intensive effort to define a long-term research and development program to begin to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles." (b)(3)(n)

In contrast, Defense Secretary Cohen announced in January 1999 that the United States would increase funding for a limited missile defense system in light of the growing certainty of emerging long-range missile threats from "rogue states." He stressed that no deployment decision had been made at the time, but that the US would work to amend the 1972 ABM Treaty, if necessary, to allow for the possibility of such deployment. President Bill Clinton signed the National Missile Defense Act on 23 July 1999, which called for deploying a territorial ballistic missile defense system as soon as technically feasible. (b)(3)(n)

Moscow's Fears (b)(3)(n)

Moscow's belief that US ballistic missile defenses threaten its ability to deter attacks by the United States has persisted, despite the change in US missile defense architecture from the robust SDI to the more limited NMD. IC products from the 1980s pointed out Moscow's fear of the "potentially far-reaching consequences [of SDI] for Soviet strategy, planning, and force structure." Today, Moscow continues to perceive US plans for even a limited

missile defense system as undermining its strategic retaliatory capability.

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Moscow is concerned that its declining strategic nuclear forces could no longer survive a first strike with enough missiles left to overcome US missile defenses, undermining its ability to deter a US attack. (b)(3)(n)

Rising concern in Russia over US global military preeminence has made Moscow all the more wary of US missile defense intentions. Despite the scaling down of the US missile defense program, the Russians cite expanding NATO membership and Western actions in the Balkans as "evidence" that they cannot trust the United States to keep a missile defense system "limited." Moscow uses such actions to buttress the suspicion that NMD was really aimed at negating the Russian missile threat. (b)(3)(n)

Russia's Military Options (b)(3)(n)

In response to SDI, Moscow threatened a variety of military countermeasures in lieu of developing a parallel missile defense system. A 1983 National Intelligence Council (NIC) report concluded that the Soviets probably perceived that they could take a number of military steps to improve their bargaining position before SDI was deployed or to counter such a system if it were put in place.¹ If the United States went forward with

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SDI, the IC judged that the Soviet military would most likely deploy more ballistic missile defense penetration aids, improve missile technology, and increase the number of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) on its missiles. (b)(3)(n)

In addition, the report predicted that Soviet development of a new intercontinental heavy bomber, the Blackjack, which was to be armed with long-range cruise missiles, would receive higher priority.

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then-General Secretary Yuri Andropov had considered such options as increasing the number of missiles, reinforcing missile silos to increase their survivability, using decoys on missiles to make intercepts more difficult, developing and deploying underwater missiles that would not be affected by the space-based missile shield,

¹ "Possible Soviet Responses to the US Strategic Defense Initiative," NIC M 83-10017, 12 September 1983. (b)(3)(n)

and using a "forgotten division" concept, whereby Moscow would secretly forward deploy an SS-20 intermediate range missile unit only to allow it to be "discovered" and bargained away in SDI negotiations.² (b)(3)(n)

The Soviets did, in fact, take steps to bolster their military in response to the Reagan initiative, but they were handicapped by their declining economy. In 1987, CIA's former Office of Soviet Analysis (SOVA) wrote that "Concern over SDI has caused [the Soviet Union] to refocus some research and development efforts and to increase funding for some research with potential application to advanced [ballistic missile defense] or countermeasures," but "the Soviets have not yet initiated major new weapons procurement programs in response." SOVA noted that Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev was faced with demands to fund military responses to SDI at the same time he was "trying to reverse two decades of declining economic growth." SOVA judged that: "For anything beyond a quite limited response, the Soviets' public claims that they could counter SDI quickly and cheaply understate the severity of the trade-offs they would have to make in responding to SDI. Indeed, some Soviets have expressed concern that the cost of deploying advanced strategic defenses while modernizing and expanding offensive forces would be prohibitive." (b)(3)(n)

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Today, Russia appears to be dusting off familiar military threats in its response to US missile defense planning. In February 2001, then-Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev threatened the resumption of “three mighty programs [begun during the SDI era] to counteract asymmetrically the national missile defense of the United States.”³ Moscow's most commonly threatened response, however, is the addition of more reentry vehicles to the SS-27 ICBM, a system designed specifically with anti-missile-defense missions in mind. (b)(3)(n)

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Once again, however, severe resource constraints cast doubts on Moscow's claims. Moscow has only one-tenth the defense resources that it had 12 years ago, and its conflict in Chechnya and badly needed conventional forces modernization cut substantially into that meager allocation. The Soviets may have considered developing their own national ballistic missile defense capability in response to SDI—possibly for greater bargaining leverage, according to IC analysts of the day—but Russian officials admit that the country cannot afford such an effort now. The nearest Russia has come to threatening a symmetric

³ “Russia Says US Antimissile Plan Means An Arms Race,” *The New York Times*, 6 February 2001. (b)(3)(n)

response is Air Force Commander Anatoly Kornukov's claim in February 2001 that Russia would consider upgrading its aging missile defense system around Moscow if the US deployed NMD.⁴ The interceptors for this system, however, already are beyond their service warranties and probably will require replacement by 2007, regardless of US plans. (b)(3)(n)

Non-Military Strategies (b)(3)(n)

In the 1980s, the Soviet Union sought to increase pressure on Washington by intensifying the concerns of US allies over SDI. In 1983, the NIC assessed that the Soviets would rely principally on a concerted political and diplomatic effort, first to force the US to drop its missile defense plans, or, failing that, to negotiate them away. The IC concluded that Soviet political and diplomatic efforts would include a “targeted peace offensive, aimed at exerting domestic political pressure in the United States and NATO countries to forego...or at least to postpone” SDI plans.⁵ The NIC's 1986 Special National Intelligence Estimate further judged that Moscow had focused on “generating Allied, domestic, and Congressional opposition to...the SDI program.” The IC expected the Soviets to use a variety of international for (b)(3)(n)

⁴ *Itar Tass*, in English, 6 February 2001, CEP20010206000086. (b)(3)(n)

⁵ See “Possible Soviet Responses to the US Strategic Defense Initiative,” NIC M 83-10017, 12 September 1983. (b)(3)(n)

“offer publicly” strategic arms reduction concessions in return for slowing or halting ballistic missile defenses. If Moscow were faced with a shift in the balance of power, the IC judged that the Soviets would consider options such as a “last-ditch effort to stop SDI deployment through arms control.”

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Today, Russia continues to try to drive a wedge between the United States and the rest of the world on the missile defense issue, proposing multilateral “constructive” alternatives to US plans for a territorial defense, such as a Global Control System to enhance missile nonproliferation efforts and a joint Russian-European nonstrategic missile defense system to address what Moscow says is the real threat—theater missiles. Moscow also has proposed dramatic arms control reductions—President Vladimir Putin has offered to reduce Russian strategic nuclear forces to 1,500 warheads or lower, provided that the ABM Treaty is maintained.

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⁶ For a sampling of Russian views, see Yevgeny Myasnikov, “High Precision Weapons and the Strategic Balance,” Center for Arms Control, Energy, and Environmental Studies, November 2000, WAX20010320000472; Vladimir Yakovlev, “Duma Discussion of START II,” *Interfax*, 11 April 2000, CEP20000411000245; and Vladimir Putin, “Russia Does Not Need New Arms Race,” *Interfax*, 14 April 2000, CEP20000414000099. (b)(3)(n)

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Then and Now (b)(3)(n)

What the Soviets Said About SDI (b)(3)(n)

...All attempts at achieving military superiority over the USSR are futile. The Soviet Union will never allow them to succeed. It will never be caught defenseless by any threat. Let there be no mistake about this in Washington. It is time they stopped devising one option after another in the search for the best ways of unleashing nuclear war in the hope of winning it. Engaging in this is not just irresponsible; it is insane.

—General Secretary Yuri Andropov
March 1983

If the (ABM Treaty) were to lapse for any reason, the foundation on which talks between the sides on nuclear arms limitation could be based and conducted would disappear. This would effectively mean the collapse of talks and an uncontrolled arms race for decades.

—Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev
Chief of the Soviet General Staff
June 1985

The simplest of the active measures to overwhelm SDI would be a simple increase in the number of Soviet strategic missiles to a level assuring penetration of the American spaceshield.

—Maj. Gen. Ivan I. Anureyev,
former professor, Soviet General Staff Academy
March 1987

What the Russians Have Said About US Missile Defense Plans (b)(3)(n)

The price may be very high—in the event of an official US decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty Russia will be forced to consider the scenario whereby it may abandon its commitments not only under the START Treaty but also under the treaty on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles (INF), the signing of which was stipulated by the legal and military parameters of the START I - ABM process.

—President Vladimir Putin
June 2000

If the United States writes off the 1972 ABM Treaty, then it will virtually be to blame for wrecking the nuclear arms limitation process. A threat will hang over all the treaties that have been signed or are in preparation. I am talking about START I and II and the consultations on START III. Russia and the United States will become unpredictable to each other. We will pull out entirely from all inspection measures and will permit no one access to our weapons. Russia will not know what is happening in the United States. The Americans will not be informed about what is happening in Russia.

On the purely military plane we will find countermeasures. About 20 measures are being considered which Russia might take without a substantial increase in expenditure... I will point out that the history of weapons provides grounds for declaring that the shield is always weaker than the sword...

—Maj. Gen. Vladimir Yakovlev
Commander, Strategic Rocket Forces
October 1999

